108 A. Basic Economy

1. Primarily pastoral, with important secondary agriculture. Fishing, hunting and gathering are dry-season activities, but only the first seems genuinely important. Agriculture is of bush-village type, without irrigation, fertilization, crop rotation, or fallow periods. The staple crop is millet, of which several species are grown, with maize of secondary importance, and a few beans are also grown. Goats, dogs, and sheep, though kept, are relatively unimportant, and chickens are not kept because both their flesh and eggs are despised. Cattle, however, are the very core of Nuer life. They are very numerous, numbering at least four times as many per capita as among the neighboring Shilluk. Milk, butter, and cheese are important items of diet, and blood is drawn almost daily from the necks of cattle; meat is also used, but only from sacrificed animals or those dying a natural death.

2. Men alone hunt and do most of the fishing. Women do the gathering. Cattle are herded exclusively by men, but milking is done only by women and uninitiated boys. Women also make butter and cheese. Men clear the land and participate equally with women in cultivation.

B. Property

1. Livestock are by far the most important possessions; they are owned by the heads of families rather than by individuals. Land is owned collectively by the community, technically by the lineage with which it is identified, and everyone has equal grazing and cultivating rights.

2. Inheritance is patrilineal. When a man dies, his cattle are inherited by his sons, who may keep them together in one herd or ultimately divide them; no one of the sons may use them to marry a second wife until all his brothers have been provided with a first

[illegible] wife. If a man dies without sons, a brother or(if no brothers) a tribe marries in his name, and the sons of this marriage are the heirs.

9. The Nuer have no slaves. They include, however, numerous Dinka war captives and immigrants, who are adopted and in a few generations become indistinguishable from other Nuer; in the meantime, however, they have a somewhat lower social status than native-born Nuer — the Chief class distinction reported in the literature. Dinka captive girls ordinarily are treated as daughters by their captors; captive and immigrant Dinka males commonly reside matrilocally, since they have no patrilineal kin to provide bride-price.

C. Marriage and the Family

1. A substantial bride-price is paid in cattle (reduced in cases of matrilocal or avunculocal residence). Though the amount is subject to negotiation, the ideal is 40 head, distributed according to the following pattern:
   a. 20 head to bride's patri-kin:
      1. 10 head to immediate family—8 to Fa and 2 to FaBo.
      2. 10 head to others —4 to FaElBr, 2 to FaYoBr, 3 to Fa's half-brothers, 1 to FaSi.
   b. 20 head to bride's matri-kin:
      1. 10 head to immediate family—3 to Mo and 7 to brothers.
      2. 10 to others —4 to MoElBr, 2 to MoYoBr, 1 to MoSi, 3 to Mo's half-brothers.

   The bride-price comes from the herd of the groom's family head, but contributions are made by paternal and maternal uncles and aunts as well. Bride-service prevails only as a means of reducing bride-price for poor men through matrilocal or avunculocal residence.
2. Polygyny is preferential and exclusively non-sororal. All wives are equal in status, and each has her own hut.

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Polygyny is apparently not actually very common, since all of a group of brothers must have a first wife before any can take a second, and because a high proportion of plural unions are of "seed raising" type rather than true marriages in a legalistic sense. There are several special kinds of marriage, as follows:

a. Woman-marriage. It is fairly common for a woman (usually a barren one) to marry one or more other women with a bride-price in the role of a man.

b. "Ghost-marriage." When any man dies without leaving a legal male heir, one of his relatives—a Br, So, BrSo, or sometimes a SiSo or even a Si—marries in his name to raise seed for him. This is a real marriage except in name, but the children are counted those of the man in whose name the marriage was contracted and inherit from him; if the seed-raising Hu has no other wife, there will have to be a ghost-marriage to raise seed for him after his death.

c. Levirate unions. When a man dies, his widows commonly go to his Br (preferably YoBr), but sometimes to a So or SiSo, but these unions are not regarded as true marriages, for the levirate husband only raises seed for the first Hu.

3. The residential group is a small extended family-basically patrilocal but with modifications in keeping with the residence rules (see D1). A man's sons reside with their father after marriage as a rule (but see D1), and try to remain together after his death in order not to split the cattle herd, but ultimately they tend to set up independent families of their own. The huts of an extended family are centered on a common cattle byre with an adjacent kraal.

D. Residence

1. The prevailing rule of residence is matri-patrilocal.

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The young wife usually lives in a hut in her father's homestead, where she is visited by her husband only at night, until the first child has been born and weaned, when she moves to a new hut in the homestead of her husband's father. Matrilocal residence is also fairly common, especially for poor men, who secure a reduction in bride-price thereby, and for captive or immigrant Dinka, who have no patrilineal kin to provide a bride-price; Dinka commonly continue matrilocal residence indefinitely, and some Nuer do so also, but most Nuer ultimately remove with their families to the village of their father. Avunculocal residence is also fairly common; it sometimes results from widows returning to the village of their brother instead of following the levirate usage, so that their sons come to be particularly close to their kin and prefer to reside with him after marriage; also, since the eldest child is supposed to go to live with his maternal grandparents, he, if a son, may similarly feel closer to his kin than to his Fa and prefer to reside avunculocally. Neolocal residence also results when men realize the ideal of establishing their own community. All in all, residence rules are quite flexible, and men commonly change communities from time to time, now living with some kin, now with others. This flexibility does not, however, destroy the general patrilocal bias. Except for an eldest child, children continue to live with their parents until puberty, but at 7 or 8 boys go to the cattle byre to sleep (or sometimes to a special hut in large villages), and unmarried girls live in a separate hut.

2. Since the members of a settlement are usually akin in one way or another, and marriage taboos encompass most kin, marriages nearly always occur between members of different communities.

E. Consanguineal Kin Groups and Exogamy

1. Incest and marriage prohibitions are extended bilateral-

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by, apparently to include third cousins. The exact relationship practically amounts to a bilateral kindred.

2. There are exogamous, finitely, non-localized *patri-sibs*, each with *spear names*. They are divided into lineages of different levels; Evans-Pritchard distinguishes maximal, major, minor, and minimal lineages. Three generations at least are required to establish a minimal lineage. The exogamous rule is extended to all members of one's mother's maximal *patri-lineage* but not to other members of the mother's sib. *Patrilineal kinship* is called *buth* - to distinguish it from bilateral kinship (*mar*).
3. Avunculocal residence, the avunculate, and other facts suggest the responsibility of former matrilineal descent. Evans-Pritchard (1951. p. 28), however, makes the speculative allegation that it is "because the agnatic principle is unchallenged in Nuer society that the tracing of descent through women is so prominent and matrilocality so prevalent."

F. Kinship Terminology

1. See special kinship charts.
2. Avuncular and nepotic terminology is bifurcate collateral.
3. Cousin terminology is descriptive, and thus of Sudanese type.

G. Community Organization

1. The Nuer are semi-nomadic. Their permanent villages, occupied during the rainy season, are located on knolls or ridges, and consist of clusters of hamlets, which in turn consist of clusters of homesteads. During the dry season, however, they live in cattle camps (of identical social composition as a rule). In the cattle camps they live in crude "beehive" huts of boughs or brush slightly rounded at the top and covered with grass or a reed mat, or often simply behind a crude windbreak of sticks and grass for pro-

section against the north wind. In the permanent settlements the dwellings are round with wattle-and-daub walls and conical thatched roofs.

2. The local settlement is essentially a patrilocal clan-community or (if large) a segmented community with patrilocal clan-barrios occupying the distinct sections. In either case the clan is composed of distinct homesteads, which are small patrilocal extended families (see C8). This social composition, however, is appropriately modified to the extent that residence is matrilocal or avunculocal (see D1). Lineages are localized, with rights to particular territories, but rarely do the members of any level of lineage actually live in the territory associated with it. In any local group, however, there is typically one dominant lineage. Boys are initiated into age-grades by circumcision on the forehead at intervals of about four years, and remain members of the same age-grade for life. Age-grades have names, and involve exogamous rules, but do not have special military or political functions.

3. The smallest political unit is the local community, called "village" by Evans-Pritchard. It has no chief or council of elders, and is held together only by a general sense of social solidarity.

4. Above the community level, the Nuer are integrated (according to E-P) into the following units of increasing size: tertiary tribal section, secondary tribal section, primary tribal section, tribe, and an eastern and a western overall division of the Nuer. These varying groups fuse and segment temporarily according to the nature of the opposing segment; thus a primary section is always arrayed against a primary section, etc. There are no chiefs, no definite mechanisms for settling feuds, although there are "leopard-skin chiefs" who are ritual agents who attempt to settle feuds, but they

306 are elected only voluntarily and have no real power. Witchdoctors have the greatest influence.

5. Warfare was once extremely common--especially against the Dinka.

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106 I. Identification

1. The Nuer tribe of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan numbered about 430,000 in 1931, and occupied a territory of about 26,000 square miles. In language they belong to the Lao branch of the Nilotic subdivision of the Southern division of the East Sudanic linguistic stock.